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ABSTRACT

Elementary and secondary school student teachers were tested before, during, and after their teaching experiences to determine if there were changes in their concerns about teaching. Three categories of concerns, each with eight items, were ranked: methods concerns, pertaining to instructional skills and content knowledge; cultural concerns, relating to the modification of personal habits and teaching procedures to meet the cultural needs of the school community; and personal concerns, meaning the satisfaction with professional and personal relationships in the context of the new role of teacher. It was found that both the elementary and the secondary groups shared the same concerns at about the same level each time they were tested. Concern with methods dominated the responses of both elementary and secondary school student teachers, increasing in number to the final test. Among the concerns which escalated after the student teaching experience for elementary school student teachers was maintaining school discipline. The secondary school student teachers reported an increase in concern with handling noninstructional tasks. (FG)

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A Comparison of Concerns of Secondary and Elementary Student Teachers

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Questions and Procedures

What are major concerns or worries of student teachers as they anticipate and subsequently experience teaching responsibilities in their field placement sites? Are concerns of student teachers related to the type of certificate sought (elementary or secondary), to the length of time student teaching duties are performed, or to uncertainties regarding personal, cultural, or pedagogic preparation?

To provide data relevant to these questions, two groups of Indiana University student teachers completed a "Frequent Concerns of Student Teachers Ranking Device" at three points in time--prior to student teaching, after ten days of student teaching duty, and at the conclusion of the total student teaching experience. The ranking device consisted of 24 projected concerns of student teachers. Each respondent first indicated his or her eight most important concerns, then his or her eight least important concerns. The remaining concerns were "medium" concerns. Ranking directions then required each student to rank the greatest (top) concerns from 1 to 8 (with #1 being the greatest worry), the least concerns (bottom) from 17 to 24 (with #24 being the very least worry), and the medium (middle) concerns from 9 to 16 (with #9 being the most important of the "middle" concerns). Respondents were encouraged to write overlooked and unlisted concerns on the Ranking Device and to give a rank to each "write-in" concern. No new concerns except "financial problems" were added by the respondents.

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A panel of five university supervisors of student teachers developed the list of student teaching concerns and trial tested the list on ten elementary and ten secondary student teachers. The panel members also reached agreement on the classification of eight concerns as "Methods" in nature, eight concerns as "Cultural" in nature, and eight concerns as "Personal" in nature. Items from the three categories were then arranged in random order on the Concerns Ranking Device with no category identification indicated to respondents (see Appendix I).

Definitions

The two student teaching groups were categorized as either mainstream secondary or mainstream elementary. The mainstream secondary group was made up of 35 secondary student teachers who received eight week student teaching placements in the university town or in their hometowns (within 60 miles of campus). These secondary education majors had no significant cultural preparation in either campus classrooms or field settings prior to student teaching.

The mainstream elementary group consisted of 32 elementary student teachers who received 16 week student teaching placements in the university town or in their hometowns (within 60 miles of campus). These elementary education majors had no significant cultural preparation in classrooms or field settings prior to student teaching.

"Methods Concerns" were defined to pertain to instructional skills, content knowledge, and required school record-keeping germane to all teachers in any school setting. "Cultural Concerns" were defined to pertain to student

teacher modification of personal habits and teaching procedures to better meet the needs of cultural and/or economic sub-groups in the school community. "Personal Concerns" were defined to pertain to student teacher satisfaction with professional and social relationships and satisfaction with a new role as a teacher in contrast to the old role of on-campus university student.

When tabulating the responses the top eight concerns or "Greatest Concerns" were those with the lowest mean ranks per group. Correspondingly, the bottom eight concerns or "Least Concerns" were those with the highest mean ranks per group and the middle eight concerns or "Medium Concerns" were those with mean ranks higher than the mean ranks of the top eight concerns but lower than the mean ranks of the bottom eight concerns. The middle eight concerns thus occupy mean rank positions nine through sixteen.

The student teachers completed the Concerns Ranking Device at three different points in time. Pre-ranking refers to responses made after completing methods courses but prior to reporting to the student teaching site. Ten day ranking was done after ten days of student teaching duty within the assigned classroom and post-ranking occurred during the final week of the student teaching assignment.

Results

Mean responses of student teachers to the Concerns Ranking Device were juxtaposed in tables so important outcomes and trends could be detected. Trends or tendencies found in Table I deal with concerns of student teachers prior to student teaching. The major concerns of these mainstream elementary and secondary student teachers prior to the student teaching experience

were very similar. The two groups shared the same eight top concerns, the majority of which were classified in the category of instructional and curricular knowledge and skills (Methods Category). Motivation of pupils and choice of teaching plans and strategies were of great concern to both elementary and secondary student teachers. Personal relationships with pupils and with school staff (Personal Category) also worried the mainstream student teachers. The concern about personal knowledge of subject matter showed some disparity between the two groups. While it was ranked in the top eight concerns of both groups, it was the second greatest concern for secondary student teachers and the eighth greatest concern for elementary student teachers. Another item with disparity between the two groups was evaluating pupil progress. While it also was ranked in the top eight concerns for both groups, it was the third greatest concern for the elementary group and the eighth greatest concern for the secondary group. Neither group had any cultural concerns important enough to rank in the top eight prior to student teaching.

The least important concerns of elementary and secondary student teachers as shown in Table I were also very similar. The two groups shared the same eight bottom concerns. Five of these least concerns were "Cultural" in nature, two were "Personal" and one dealt with "Methods." Both groups of student teachers seemed to have little concern about their living conditions (housing) while student teaching or about separation from college friends and campus activities during the student teaching semester.

It appears that student teachers destined to teach in their hometown or university town do not think deeply about the culture of their placement site

or about cultural components of its instructional program. In many cases, the cultural conditions of the student teaching placement are probably very similar to the conditions experienced by the student teachers throughout their years as public school pupils. It is therefore likely that multicultural field placements must supplement mainstream field placements and cultural courses must be added to teacher education programs before student teachers will be seriously concerned with cultural dimensions of teaching. The student teachers in this study, enrolled in mainstream education courses and destined for mainstream field sites, obviously did not give high priority to cultural challenges in the public school world. Study data simply did not indicate much concern for incorporating multicultural topics or approaches into the student teaching performance.

Table II illustrates the following trends in student teacher concerns after two weeks of duty in public school classrooms. There was relatively little change in the top eight concerns of both groups of student teachers as expressed prior to student teaching and as expressed after ten days of classroom duty. The top eight concerns carried to the placement site tended to remain the top eight concerns during the first two weeks of student teaching. Of these top eight concerns, six were still classified in the category of instruction and curricular knowledge and skills (Methods Category). The top two concerns dealt with motivating pupils and choosing teaching plans and strategies. Two of these top eight concerns were from the "Personal Category." The secondary group, it is important to note, was concerned that pupils might not be perceiving them as real teachers while the elementary group worried about relationships with their pupils. Neither group, after ten days of teaching, had any cultural concerns important enough to rank in the top eight.

The least important concerns of the two groups were again very similar and showed almost no change from the pre-student teaching results. The groups shared seven of the bottom eight concerns with five being "Cultural" in nature. The two lowest ranking concerns were of a "Personal" nature dealing with housing and lifestyle changes made while student teaching.

The following trends, determined from Table III, deal with concerns of student teachers at the end of their experience. The major concerns of their field experience remained very similar. The two groups shared seven of their top eight concerns with motivating pupils and choosing teaching plans remaining their greatest worries. Personal/professional relationships with pupils concerned the student teachers of both groups. Relationships with school staff members also challenged the secondary group while communicating with parents and adults challenged the elementary group. There were no great shifts in the specific concerns of the student teachers in the time interval between the first ten days of teaching and the conclusion of the field experience.

The least important concerns of the two groups of student teachers remained rather similar--six of their bottom eight concerns were still shared. Cultural and personal concerns remained least important to both groups.

Table IV presents the grand means of each concern for both student teaching groups to show the highest ranking concerns over all three periods of data collection. The two student teaching groups shared the same eight greatest concerns over the entire time span from before starting student teaching until finishing. Six of the eight were in the "methods" category, with motivating students and choosing teaching plans and strategies ranking first and second with both groups. While the great emphasis on methods

related concerns is probably to be expected since these are the areas in which student teachers have had little time to profit from experience, these concerns do suggest that more should be done to prepare education majors to be confident, decision-making professionals. Method courses taken prior to student teaching deal with these concerns but apparently not with sufficient effectiveness. These overall concerns or worries of student teachers should be of interest to methods professors who desire to bring more elements and challenges of the public school classroom into the college classroom. Questions are stimulated. Are methods courses adequately field-oriented or field-based? Is more assistance needed by student teachers as they attempt to apply methods precepts in the public school classroom? What blend of inservice teacher and method professor assistance would be most feasible and productive?

The student teachers of both groups tended not to have many major personal type concerns. However, the two that did fall in the top eight are fundamental to teacher success and satisfaction. Relationships with pupils and professional relationships with school staff were found to be among the top concerns of both groups. Secondary student teachers, it may be noted, ranked these two relationship concerns even more important than did the elementary student teachers. Differences in age proximity between student teachers and school pupils may be contributing to these relationship worries. Pupils undoubtedly see student teachers as younger than classroom teachers and somewhat closer to pupils in interests and perspectives. Classroom teachers may also perceive student teachers as closer in age to pupils than to veteran teachers. Normally the secondary student teacher is only four to five years older than high school juniors and seniors. Thus the

secondary student teacher probably has a more difficult time than the elementary student teacher in occupying a position satisfactory to self, pupil, and classroom teacher on the "friend ..... professional teacher" continuum.

Table V shows concerns that increased over the entire period. The secondary group found choosing teaching plans and strategies, locating and utilizing curricular materials, and evaluating pupil progress to be ever increasing concerns while the elementary group progressively became more concerned with maintaining classroom discipline and with personal knowledge of their subject matter. Although four of these concerns are generally central to methods courses in teacher preparation programs, it would appear that methods classes do not fully equip the education majors to deal with them while in the classroom. The data of this study suggest that many student teachers do not feel sufficiently prepared to teach the content areas they have been certified to teach. Do education majors, especially elementary ones, master enough content hours in Colleges of Arts and Sciences?

It is also important to note that the student teaching experience itself failed to diminish these concerns of the student teachers. The concerns in Table V all increased in intensity from before to after the field experience. Perhaps university professors should search for new answers to what is needed in teacher preparation programs to reduce the worries of prospective teachers. Apparently an eight week or sixteen week placement in a public school classroom during the final semester is no magic supplement to methods instruction. The student teaching experience and the methods preparation both should be examined for needed revisions.

Summary of the Major Trends

The elementary and secondary student teachers surveyed shared the same top concerns, the same bottom concerns, and hence the same middle level concerns at all three time periods when concerns data were collected. Concerns relating to pedagogy (how to motivate, plan, evaluate, discipline, and use materials, as well as personal knowledge of the subject matter) loom as very important and enduring concerns of student teachers. These concerns were taken to the student teaching site and diminished little during the student teaching experience. Non-methods type concerns which grew more intense in the period of time from pre-student teaching to the completion of ten days of student teaching for both groups were being perceived as a real teacher by pupils and feeling satisfied with the program and philosophy of the school.

While the student teachers of both groups did not have many serious personal type concerns during their experience, they did seem to have some problems building professional relationships with both pupils and school staff members. Teacher preparation programs probably provided few opportunities to practice these essential relationships. The university professor-university student relationship is an insufficient model because different conditions and forces impinge in the public school setting. Models for the analysis and development of professional relationships appear needed. Education majors are "students" on campus one semester and "professionals" in a public school the next semester. Along with the role change comes the need to satisfy two or three new constituencies -- pupils, educators, and parents. The quality of these initial relationships should not be left to chance.

The mainstream student teachers tended not to have major concerns of a cultural nature at any of the time periods. Although one item (adapting teaching style to fit culture) was not a top concern of the elementary or secondary student teachers at the end of their experience, that item did have a very high standard deviation for both groups. Obviously, some student teachers were encountering cultural or economic differences at times in their schools which created situational apprehensions.

"Is teaching the right career for me?" was a bottom concern for the elementary group and a middle concern for the secondary group at the end of the student teaching experience. However for both groups at all times a very large standard deviation accompanied the mean score for this concern. Thus several student teachers in both groups apparently were questioning whether they belong in the teaching profession.

The student teachers tended not to generate any new concerns in addition to the ones stated on the concerns instrument. Financial problems related to the payment of tuition, the payment of rent, and the inability to hold a fulltime job while teaching all day in a school were the only "write-in" concerns received. Basically, both groups of student teachers were worried about the day-to-day procedures of teaching. When do these methodological concerns diminish? What factors or interventions best lead to this diminishment? Follow-up surveys of major concerns at the end of the first inservice year, the second inservice year, and later inservice years are needed.

Table I. Greatest and Least Concerns of Two Groups of Student Teachers Prior to the Student Teaching Experience

Specific Concerns of Student Teachers	MAINSTREAM SECONDARY N=35				MAINSTREAM ELEMENTARY N=32			
	IMPORTANCE	CATEGORY	MEAN RANK	S.D.	IMPORTANCE	CATEGORY	MEAN RANK	S.D.
TOP 8 CONCERNS								
(t) Motivating pupils to work	# 1	M	4.08	3.02	# 1	M	3.65	3.47
(g) Personal knowledge of subject matter	# 2	M	4.88	4.17	# 8	M	9.21	5.23
(i) Choosing teaching plans/strategies	# 3	M	5.11	4.01	# 2	M	5.62	4.24
(e) Relationships with pupils	# 4	P	6.82	4.36	# 4	P	7.84	5.94
(d) Locating/utilizing relevant curricular materials	# 5	M	7.00	4.51	# 7	M	9.03	5.22
(k) Maintaining room discipline	# 6	M	7.82	5.36	# 6	M	8.59	5.19
(b) Professional relationships with school staff	# 7	P	8.22	6.24	# 5	P	8.00	4.69
(r) Evaluating pupil progress	# 8	M	8.25	4.46	# 3	M	6.71	4.37
BOTTOM 8 Concerns								
(c) Housing at placement site	#24	P	21.60	2.69	#24	P	22.96	1.33
(w) Separation from college joys	#23	P	20.60	4.38	#23	P	21.18	3.69
(a) Working with non-English speakers	#22	C	19.62	3.61	#22	C	19.43	4.91
(o) Avoiding cultural errors	#21	C	18.91	4.00	#20	C	18.37	3.84
(s) Adapting to cultural shock	#20	C	18.25	4.59	#21	C	19.21	4.82
(m) Handling non-instructional tasks	#19	M	18.20	4.32	#19	M	18.12	3.26
(f) Acceptance by community people	#18	C	16.05	4.15	#17	C	14.75	5.26
(q) Understanding culture of the people	#17	C	15.45	5.22	#18	C	14.93	5.14

Table II. Greatest and Least Concerns of Two Groups of Student Teachers After Two Weeks of Student Teaching

Specific Concerns of Student Teachers	MAINSTREAM SECONDARY N=35				MAINSTREAM ELEMENTARY N=32			
	IMPORTANCE	CATEGORY	MEAN RANK	S.D.	IMPORTANCE	CATEGORY	MEAN RANK	S.D.
TOP 8 CONCERNS								
(i) Choosing teaching plans/strategies	# 1	M	3.94	2.64	# 2	M	4.43	3.74
(t) Motivating pupils to work	# 2	M	4.71	3.64	# 1	M	4.09	4.16
(g) Personal knowledge of subject matter	# 3	M	4.97	4.69	# 6	M	8.06	5.66
(k) Maintaining room discipline	# 4	M	6.31	5.39	# 4	M	6.65	4.05
(d) Locating/utilizing relevant curricular materials	# 5	M	6.74	4.33	# 3	M	6.37	4.57
(r) Evaluating pupil progress	# 6	M	7.77	4.04	# 5	M	7.03	4.05
(b) Professional relationships with school staff	# 7	P	8.05	6.08	# 7	P	8.21	4.82
(u) Do pupils perceive me as a real teacher?	# 8	P	8.74	3.64	-		-	-
(e) Relationships with pupils	-		-	-	# 8	P	8.81	4.92
BOTTOM 8 CONCERNS								
(c) Housing at placement site	#24	P	21.25	3.55	#24	P	21.31	5.18
(w) Separation from college joys	#23	P	20.17	4.57	#23	P	20.96	4.04
(a) Working with non-English speakers	#22	C	19.71	3.71	#20	C	17.78	6.27
(s) Adapting to cultural shock	#21	C	18.74	3.47	#22	C	20.15	3.30
(f) Acceptance by community people	#19	C	16.82	4.52	-		-	-
(m) Handling non-instructional tasks	#18	M	16.74	4.38	#17	M	15.87	4.06
(x) Adapting teaching to fit culture	#17	C	16.60	4.64	#18	C	15.93	5.62
(q) Understanding culture of the people	-		-	-	#19	C	16.59	4.65
(o) Avoiding cultural errors	#20	C	18.31	4.49	#21	C	19.25	2.94

Table III. Greatest and Least Concerns of Two Groups of Student Teachers at the Conclusion of the Student Teaching Experience

Specific Concerns of Student Teachers	MAINSTREAM SECONDARY N=35				MAINSTREAM ELEMENTARY N=32			
	IMPORTANCE	CATEGORY	MEAN RANK	S.D.	IMPORTANCE	CATEGORY	MEAN RANK	S.D.
TOP 8 CONCERNS								
(t) Motivating pupils to work	# 1	M	3.85	2.27	# 1	M	3.96	3.90
(i) Choosing teaching plans/strategies	# 2	M	3.91	3.03	# 2	M	4.65	2.40
(g) Personal knowledge of subject matter	# 3	M	5.88	4.33	# 6	M	7.21	5.56
(r) Evaluating pupil progress	# 4	M	6.37	3.17	# 5	M	6.68	4.02
(k) Maintaining room discipline	# 5	M	6.37	5.03	# 3	M	4.71	3.13
(d) Locating/utilizing relevant curricular materials	# 6	M	6.45	4.13	# 4	M	6.46	3.91
(e) Relationships with pupils	# 7	P	7.35	4.52	# 8	P	9.65	4.83
(b) Professional relationship with staff	# 8	P	8.22	5.81	-		-	-
(n) Communicating with parents/adults	-		-	-	# 7	C	9.00	3.75
BOTTOM 8 CONCERNS								
(a) Working with non-English speakers	#24	C	20.45	3.67	#21	C	18.12	6.08
(w) Separation from college joys	#23	P	20.14	4.40	#23	P	21.90	4.08
(c) Housing at placement site	#22	P	19.57	5.08	#24	P	22.90	3.36
(s) Adapting to cultural shock	#21	C	19.17	3.86	-		-	-
(o) Avoiding cultural errors	#20	C	18.62	3.87	#22	C	19.53	4.68
(q) Understanding culture of the people	#19	C	16.88	4.84	-		-	-
(f) Acceptance by community people	#18	C	16.71	3.39	#19	C	15.75	4.37
(m) Handling non-instructional tasks	#17	M	15.60	4.67	#20	M	16.25	4.47
(p) Is teaching the right career for me?	-		-	-	#18	P	15.71	8.84
(x) Adapting teaching to fit culture	-		-	-	#17	C	15.09	6.11

Table IV. Greatest Concerns From Pre to Post Student Teaching

GROUP	IMPORTANCE	CATEGORY	SPECIFIC CONCERN	GRAND MEAN RANK
Secondary	#1	M	(t) Motivating students to work	4.21
N=35	#2	M	(i) Choosing teaching plans/strategies	4.32
	#3	M	(g) Personal knowledge of subject matter	5.24
	#4	M	(d) Locating and utilizing curriculum materials	6.73
	#5	M	(k) Maintaining room discipline	6.83
	#6	M	(r) Evaluating pupil progress	7.46
	#7	P	(e) Maintaining a personal/professional relationship with pupils	7.64
	#8	P	(b) Developing a professional relationship with school staff members	8.16
Elementary	#1	M	(t) Motivating students to work	3.88
N=32	#2	M	(i) Choosing teaching plans and strategies	4.90
	#3	M	(k) Maintaining room discipline	6.65
	#4	M	(r) Evaluating pupil progress	6.80
	#5	M	(d) Locating and utilizing curriculum materials	7.28
	#6	M	(g) Personal knowledge of subject matter	8.16
	#7	P	(e) Maintaining a personal/professional relationship with pupils	8.76
	#8	P	(b) Developing a professional relationship with school staff members	8.78

Table V. Student Teacher Concerns Which Escalated From Pre to Post Student Teaching

Group		Specific Concern	Mean Rank Pre	10 Day	Post
Secondary N=35	(d)	Locating/utilizing curriculum materials	7.00	6.74	6.45
	(i)	Choosing teaching plans and strategies	5.11	3.94	3.91
	(l)	Satisfaction with school program and philosophy	14.34	13.28	12.85
	(m)	Handling non-instructional tasks	18.20	16.74	15.60
	(r)	Evaluating pupil progress	8.25	7.77	6.37
Elementary N=32	(g)	Personal knowledge of subject matter	9.21	8.06	7.21
	(j)	Incorporating cultural topics/values	11.65	10.67	10.53
	(k)	Maintaining room discipline	8.59	6.65	4.71
	(u)	Do pupils perceive me as a real teacher?	11.96	11.59	11.43

Appendix I

The 24 Student Teaching Concerns Listed on the Ranking Instrument

(Grouped Within Categories)

Methods Category:

Instructional and Curricular Knowledge and Skills

(d) Locating and using the most relevant curricular materials for my specific group of students.

(g) Knowing enough subject matter (facts, principles, issues, etc.) to effectively teach my assigned elementary grade or high school courses.

(i) Choosing and combining various teaching techniques, plans, and strategies for maximum instructional effectiveness (lecture, questioning, sub-group activities, independent study, etc.).

(k) Maintaining good classroom discipline while I am teaching.

(m) Handling the non-instructional duties of teachers like money collecting, official record keeping, attendance taking, report filing, etc.

(r) Evaluating accurately the academic progress made by students as a result of my instructional efforts.

(t) Motivating my students to work, study, and learn successfully.

(v) Getting sufficient and timely constructive feedback about my own daily student teaching performance.

Cultural Category:

Cultural Knowledge and Skills

(a) Working with people whose native language is not English or who often speak non-standard English.

(j) Introducing appropriate and sufficient multicultural topics, values, and information into my teaching.

(o) Avoiding culturally inappropriate behavior at my placement site.

(g) Knowing and understanding the cultural values, cultural issues, historical past, and lifestyle of the citizens in my school community.

(s) Adapting to whatever cultural shock the geographical or social conditions of my placement site present.

(f) Being warmly accepted as a person by the community people at my placement site.

(n) Communicating openly and effectively with the parents of my students and with other adults in my school community.

(x) Adapting my own teaching style and mannerisms to fit the cultural background and characteristics of the students in my assigned school.

Personal Category:

Personal Relationships and Satisfactions

(b) Developing a solid professional working relationship (as opposed to social relationship) with the supervising teacher, principal, other teachers, and educational specialists in my school.

(c) Living in the type of housing that I have been assigned (or must choose) in my student teaching assignment.

(e) Maintaining a proper personal/professional relationship with the students in my classroom.

(h) Enjoying warm, satisfying, and sufficient informal social relationships with various people in the school and community.

(l) Feeling comfortable and satisfied with the educational program and philosophy of my assigned school.

(p) Proving to myself that I truly enjoy teaching school and have chosen the "right" professional career for me.

(u) Being perceived by my students as a "real teacher" with instructional skills, ability, commitment, and authority.

(w) Giving up many or most of my favorite college campus friends and activities while I spend many weeks living in my student teaching community.